

PREFACE

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for the science-based management, conservation, and protection of living marine resources within the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). As one of the key elements of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), within the Department of Commerce, NMFS is also known as NOAA Fisheries.

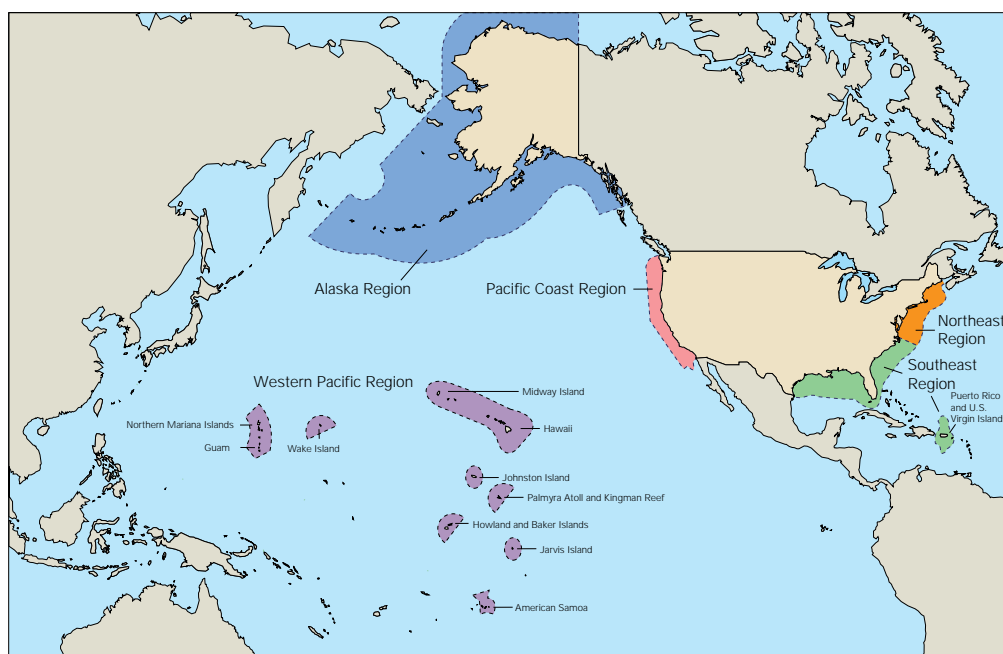
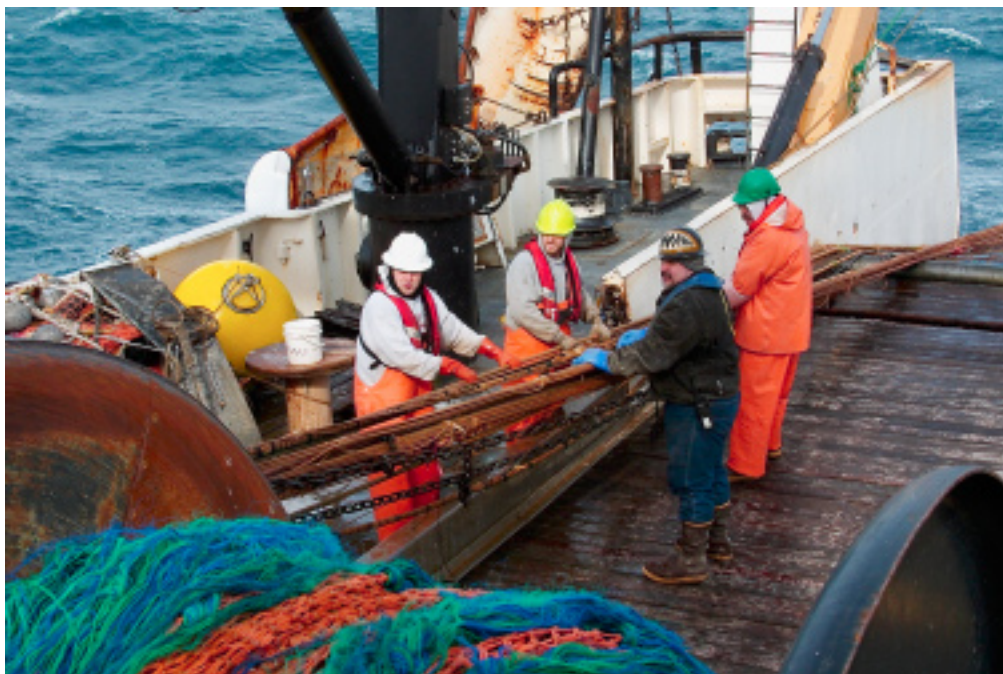


Figure 1. The U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.

The U.S. EEZ is the largest in the world, encompassing 1.7 times the area of the United States and territorial landmass (Fig. 1). The EEZ is located 3–200 nautical miles (n.mi.) seaward of the 48 contiguous states, Alaska, Hawaii, and US-affiliated islands except off Texas, the Florida Gulf Coast, and Puerto Rico where the EEZ extends 9–200 n.mi. The EEZ is composed of at least eight Large Marine Ecosystems (NE & SE continental shelf, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, California Current, Insular Pacific Hawaiian, Gulf of Alaska, and Eastern Bering Sea). Fisheries have developed in the United States as each area was settled, whether by the original aboriginal peoples or the post-Columbian arrivals. Inshore marine fisheries are managed by states, regional Marine Fisheries Commissions, and even some municipalities and counties in some areas. Fisheries in the EEZ beyond state jurisdiction (3 n.mi. in most states) are the responsibility of the Federal government, specifically NMFS in concert with eight Fishery Management Councils (FMCs). Information about this system of management is available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/sfweb/index.htm>.

In addition to its primary responsibilities within the EEZ, NMFS also plays a supportive and advisory role in the management of living marine resources in coastal areas under state jurisdiction, provides scientific and policy leadership in

Handling a trawl net.
Photo: AFSC.

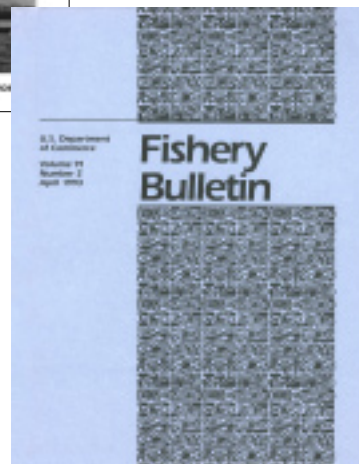
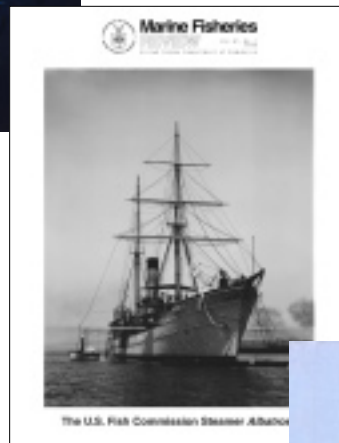
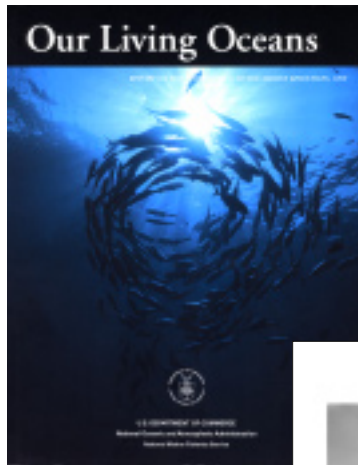


the international arena, and implements international conservation and management measures as appropriate.

The agency's long-term commitment to scientific excellence via internal and external peer-reviewed scientific publications has materially advanced marine science and policy for over 130 years. Since 1871, Federal fisheries scientists have collected, researched, analyzed, and published peer-reviewed data on the Nation's living marine resources, marine ecosystems, and the benefits that they provide. Under this peer-review process, important agency findings are published in many highly respected journals. Recently, NMFS has instituted a science quality assurance program to consistently monitor and review NMFS research efforts to ensure that they are of the highest quality. Further, this program identifies gaps in infrastructure, facilities, and resources that may affect the productivity of NMFS scientists.

The NMFS Scientific Publications Office (SPO) and the Scientific Editor ensure the editorial and scientific integrity of the Agency's research products: peer-reviewed journals, professional papers, and technical memoranda. These products and other regional NMFS publication materials serve as the basis for agency scientific reports, regulatory documents, and technical presentations available to fishery scientists and managers, the commercial and recreational fisheries interests, environmental groups, the information community (media), and the public. Thus, the agency's comprehensive scientific research and publishing efforts provide the foundation for developing sound policies that govern the use, protection, restoration, and conservation of living marine resources, marine habitats, and related aquatic environments.

This document builds upon significant internal planning initiatives and external reviews.



Examples of SPO publications.

Commercial troller off
the California coast.
Photo: Allen Shimada,
NMFS.

